

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

WRITERS' NOTES

BY MATTE O'BRIEN | BOOK & LYRICS & MATT VINSON | MUSIC



MATTE O'BRIEN'S NOTES

To me, *Anne of Green Gables* is a love story—or rather—it's many love stories. L.M. Montgomery explores endless shades of love throughout the Avonlea tales: romantic love and platonic love—love between

friends, and siblings, and parents and children, and mentors, and even frenemies. Yet, somewhat uniquely, she never places one form of love above another. In so many stories romantic love is presented as the ideal and most important type of love. But, that's not the case in much of L.M. Montgomery's work; one of the greatest love stories she tells in *Anne of Green Gables* is the deep platonic bond between two unmarried siblings, Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. They share a profound connection; some would call them soulmates—or, perhaps, kindred spirits.

Growing up as a queer person in a conservative town, I never felt like I belonged. I suppose we've all had that feeling at some point in our lives. When my mother first introduced me and my sisters to Anne, I felt an instant connection with the character. This red haired, freckled orphan, who was melodramatic, bookish, overly verbose and imaginative, with a quick temper and a stubborn nature, didn't seem to fit into the social constructs of the town of Avonlea. She was somehow "other," like me—like so many of us. We've all had the feeling of standing outside a group or community, looking in, longing to be seen, to be recognized, to have our value acknowledged, to connect. That longing to love and be loved, to belong, is timeless. I think that's why, over a hundred years after L.M. Montgomery first dreamed up *Anne of Green Gables*, the story endures.

Though the show is set in the period of the books, the turn of the 1900s, the script and score have a very contemporary flare. When we would talk to people about the piece they seemed to either think it had to be *Little House on the Prairie* or *Spring Awakening*. That it

would either be a quaint children's show, or somehow betray the beloved aesthetic of the original work. Our vision was always a show that felt simultaneously classic and contemporary. We wanted people who knew the Green Gables stories to recognize and love our version, and people who'd never encountered them to be converted to full on "F-Annes with an E!"



MATT VINSON'S NOTES

Similar to Matte, I relate most to Anne's arc as an outsider longing for a place to belong in the world. Her ability to hold the most determined, confident stances while simultaneously wearing her heart on her

sleeve is a defining trait that calls for a rather expansive emotional (and musical) range. Stylistically, we drew from musical theatre, folk, rock, pop, and country influences to create the score—definitely a bit of an eclectic mix! Our orchestrator, Justin Goldner, is a true genius in his ability to weave together an instrumental texture that allows for all the comedic and heartfelt ups and downs while maintaining a cohesive sound that blends both electric and acoustic elements.

We've been blessed to work with three incredible artists throughout the development process: Jenn Thompson, Jennifer Jancuska, and Amanda Morton. The direction, choreography, and music direction of this piece are thrilling. Jancuska's exciting choreography and musical staging is so fresh and unexpected. Morton is hands down one of the best musical supervisors in the business—she not only shapes the sonic world with precision and artistry, but also drives powerful musical interpretations that are fully-realized performances. And, Thompson—I realize Goodspeed audiences know well what she's capable of—but, let me be the first to say: you ain't seen nothing yet!